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Non-atom arms asked for NATO

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Washington — A \$20 billion plan for defending Europe with conventional missiles and drastically reducing reliance on nuclear weapons was urged yesterday by an international group of defense and foreign policy authorities.

The centerpiece of the plan would be thousands of short- and medium-range missiles armed with self-guided warheads that could strike Soviet armor, air bases and supply lines from the front lines to depths of about 185 miles.

With this array of "smart" weapons, it was reasoned, North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces could refurbish their ability to deter Warsaw Pact attack and at the same time restore assurance to Europeans and Americans alarmed about nuclear war.

The plan, prepared over 18 months by a European security study group of more than 50 Americans, Britons, Germans and Norwegians, was published in a 260-page book, "Strengthening Conventional Deterrence in Europe," published by St. Martin's Press and released yesterday in Washington and Bonn. The work was done under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The plan, with its promise of successful defense and lessened reliance on nuclear arms, gives a rationale for what would be reasonable spending increases in relation to current NATO budgets, retired Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, a member of the study's steering group, told reporters. General Goodpaster has been involved with NATO defense since the alliance was created and is a former commander of allied forces.

The \$20 billion estimate — which the planners said could vary as much as 50 percent upward or downward — was for the cost of buying the proposed arsenal of conventionally

armed missiles and the necessary surveillance and data-processing equipment to make it possible to attack targets almost the moment they are detected — and for 10 years of operation.

The weapons, with work on some of the technologies already well advanced in several countries, would become available in the 1986-1988 period.

The proposal calls for new arms to hold a Warsaw Pact armored attack at the inter-German border, while the new family of ground- and aircraft-launched missiles strikes deep beyond the battle area against oncoming reinforcements and air bases.

"This [proposal] shows a specific program which says you can reduce the degree of dependence on nuclear weapons," said Robert R. Bowie, a former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, State Department official and Harvard international affairs professor. "This is eating at people on both sides of the Atlantic. The concern about nuclear war is very real. This says you can't exclude it, but you sure can put it off."

The proposal, Mr. Bowie said, now will "put a lot of people to the test" of whether they will genuinely support what the book called "a more robust, imaginative and effective conventional [non-nuclear] capability."

This "imaginative" capability, as the planners laid it out, would involve at least 900 missiles carrying self-guided "buses" filled with sub-munitions to attack the 30 to 40 main Warsaw Pact air bases and 100 choke points, such as river crossing areas. Aircraft forced to lesser bases and forces stuck at the choke points then would be open to NATO aircraft bombing attack.

The plan called further for 5,000 non-nuclear missiles with "smart" warheads to attack Soviet reinforcements before they could reach the front and exploit any breakthrough. And, for the close-in battle, the plan envisioned an ability to get off "1,000 salvos of multiple rocket systems with terminally guided warheads" that seek out their targets.

The planners did not hold out that their proposed forces would defeat a Warsaw Pact attack or that the ability to inflict defeat was necessary — "it could be enough to deter if the NATO capability was seen to present unacceptable risks," Dr. Moscow.

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